

## PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN

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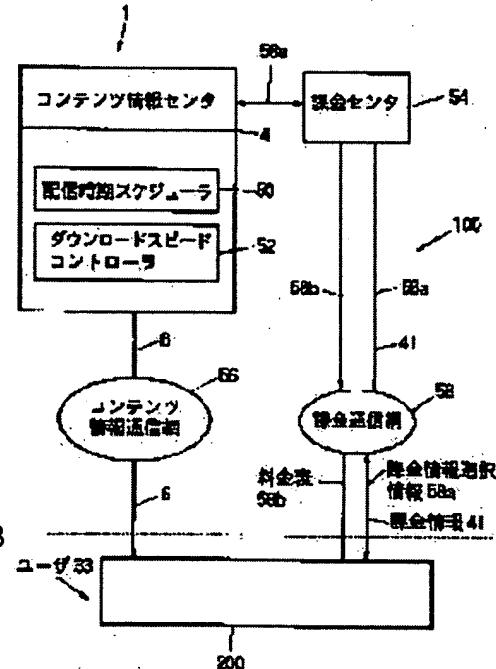
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H04N 7/16(21)Application number : 10-282671 (71)Applicant : SONY CORP  
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## (54) INFORMATION DISTRIBUTING METHOD AND INFORMATION PROVIDING METHOD

## (57)Abstract:

**PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED:** To provide an information distributing method by which a receiver receives information in a desired period and an information distributor efficiently charges and distributes information by deciding the accounting amount of information in accordance with the period when the receiver receives information.

**SOLUTION:** A user 33 designates the obtaining of desired contents data 6. Designated information is transmitted to an accounting center 54 as accounting information selecting information 58a. The information 58 is given to a contents information center 4. The accounting center 54 transmits an usage table 58b as information concerning usage charge (the charging amount) to information receiving equipment 200. Then the usage charge is displayed on a screen, based on a selected condition. The usage charge is displayed by distributing accounting information 41 having information concerning the usage charge from the contents information center 4 to the user 33. Therefore, information distributed to the receiver is charged in accordance with the period which is desired by the receiver to receive information.



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## CLAIMS

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[Claim(s)]

[Claim 1] The information distribution approach which is the information distribution approach for charging information and distributing to an addressee, and is characterized by determining the amount of accounting of said information according to the stage when said addressee receives said information.

[Claim 2] Said information is the information distribution approach according to claim 1 which are speech information, image information, and text information.

[Claim 3] Said information is the information distribution approach according to claim 1 distributed using radiocommunication or a wire communication.

[Claim 4] The information distribution approach which is the information distribution approach for charging information and distributing to an addressee, and is characterized by determining the amount of accounting of said information according to the transmission speed which distributes said information to said addressee.

[Claim 5] Said information is the information distribution approach according to claim 4 which are speech information, image information, and text information.

[Claim 6] Said information is the information distribution approach according to claim 4 distributed using radiocommunication or a wire communication.

[Claim 7] The information distribution approach characterized by determining the amount of accounting of said information according to the information record medium with which it is the information distribution approach for charging information and distributing to an addressee, and said addressee receives said information.

[Claim 8] Said information is the information distribution approach according to claim 7 which are speech information, image information, and text information.

[Claim 9] Said information is the information distribution approach according to claim 7 distributed using radiocommunication or a wire communication.

[Claim 10] The information offer approach which is the information offer approach for charging information and offering it, and is characterized by determining the amount of accounting of said information according to the stage when said information is received.

[Claim 11] The information offer approach which is the information offer approach for charging information and offering it, and is characterized by determining the amount of accounting of said information according to the rate which supplies said information at the time of offering said information.

[Claim 12] The information offer approach characterized by determining the amount of accounting of said information according to the information record medium with which it is the information offer approach for charging information and offering it, and said information is received.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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### [Detailed Description of the Invention]

[0001]

[Field of the Invention] This invention relates to the information distribution approach and the information offer approach for charging information and distributing it.

[0002]

[Description of the Prior Art] In recent years, various information (it is hereafter called contents) is circulating by the so-called development of multimedia industry. These contents are distributed by the data communications service (it is hereafter called service) using wire communications, such as the radiocommunication and CATV (Cable Television) which use a communication satellite etc., and the Internet. With this service, predetermined accounting was made corresponding to the distributed contents. In the conventional service, the music information as speech information, image information, text information, etc., image information, a program, etc. are transmitted to the user (it is hereafter called a user) of a receiving side in the predetermined format, respectively.

[0003]

[Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention] The amount of accounting to these contents is determined by initial setting regardless of the transmission speed of the stage which the user as an addressee can receive, or contents in many cases, and the amount of accounting seems however, not to differ according to the transmission speed naturally. Therefore, in a user side, the stage to receive the contents distributed will be limited and there is a trouble that it cannot set up by itself. On the other hand, in the information distribution person side who distributes contents, there is a time zone when distribution to a user overlaps, and there is a trouble that high-speed processing remarkable for distributing to a user is needed for this time zone.

[0004] Then, this invention can cancel the above-mentioned technical problem, an addressee can receive information at a desired stage, and it aims at an information distribution person offering the information distribution approach and the information offer approach of charging information and distributing it efficiently.

[0005]

[Means for Solving the Problem] If the above-mentioned object is in this invention, it is the information distribution approach for charging and distributing information to an addressee, and is attained by the information distribution approach characterized by determining the amount of accounting of said information according to the stage when said addressee receives said information.

[0006] According to the above-mentioned configuration, the information distributed to an addressee is charged to an addressee according to the stage to wish to receive in information. Therefore, an addressee can receive information at a desired stage and is further charged at information according to the stage.

[0007]

[Embodiment of the Invention] Hereafter, the gestalt of suitable operation of this invention is explained to a detail based on an accompanying drawing. In addition, since the gestalt of the operation described below is the suitable example of this invention, desirable various definition is attached technically, but especially the range of this invention is not restricted to these gestalten, as long as there is no publication of the purport which limits this invention in the following explanation.

[0008] Drawing 1 is image drawing of the information carrier distribution system by which the information distribution approach as a desirable operation gestalt of this invention was applied. The information carrier distribution system 100 (information carrier distribution equipment) is constituted by the contents provider 35, the contents negotiation service contractor 4, and the user 33. The information carrier distribution system 100 is a system for acquiring the music from those (contents provider 35 of drawing 1) who desire musical offer, and providing a third party (user 33 of drawing 1) with the music widely.

[0009] The above-mentioned contents providers 35 are those who write music, and are those who desire to offer the music which self composed to a third party. The contents provider 35 registers into the

contents negotiation contractor 4 the contents data 6 (information, speech information, and image information), such as music data which self composed.

[0010] The above-mentioned contents negotiation service contractor 4 receives registration of the music of which the contents provider 35 expects registration. The contents negotiation service contractor 4 provides for the user 33 who desires to listen to desired music from the music of the accumulated large number etc. The contents negotiation offer contractor 4 distributes information to the information receiving set 200 (addressee) which a user 33 (addressee) operates and which is mentioned later with information distribution equipment 1 (some information carrier distribution equipments) like drawing 4 mentioned later.

[0011] In case the contents negotiation service contractor 4 offers information, such as music, a wire communication and radiocommunication may be used and you may be such combination. As an example using a wire communication, there is a gestalt using the Internet, CATV (when Cable Television, however this distribute image information etc.), an ATM (Asynchronous Transfer Mode) communication link, etc., and there is a gestalt using a communication satellite, terrestrial broadcasting, etc. as an example using radiocommunication. In addition, it cannot be overemphasized that these combination is sufficient as the above gestalt. By the following explanation, in case it distributes, the Internet shall be used as an example and the example of a configuration of the information carrier distribution system 100 is explained.

[0012] Drawing 2 is the perspective view showing an example of the appearance of the information distribution equipment 1 of drawing 1. Information distribution equipment 1 is a computer (the so-called personal computer may be used) in which for example, high-speed processing is possible. In addition, although it is equipment with which the information receiving set 200 applies to a computer or it almost similarly (for example, information terminal etc.), since the configuration is almost the same, the following explanation explains only information distribution equipment 1, and explains a different point each time.

[0013] Information distribution equipment 1 is a computer 21. A computer 21 has a means for grasping an information distribution person's distribution situation, and a user's 30 receiving situation. A computer 21 has the disk unit 13 prepared in body 21a which has control sections, such as arithmetic and program control (CPU), and body 21a, a pointing device 3, a display 5, and a keyboard 11.

[0014] The computer 21 is equipped with the disk unit 13 which can read the information on the information record medium 15 at least. This information record medium 15 is a compact disk (CD-ROM), a flexible disk (floppy disk), etc.

[0015] Drawing 3 is the block diagram showing the detailed electric example of a configuration of the computer of drawing 2. a computer 21 -- a control section 9, a display 5, the storage section 17, a disk unit 13, and the enternal memory section 19 -- it has a pointing device 3 and a keyboard 11 preferably.

[0016] It connects with a display 5, the storage section 17, a disk unit 13, and the enternal memory section 19, and the above-mentioned control section 9 is preferably connected with the pointing device 3 and the keyboard 11. A control section 9 is for controlling each connected above-mentioned block. A control section 9 stores software in the enternal memory sections 19, such as a hard disk, and is a thing which is the need and which is performed while, making the storage sections 17, such as RAM (Random AccessMemory), into a working area by the way, for example.

[0017] The above-mentioned displays 5 are displays, such as CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) and a liquid crystal display. The above-mentioned pointing device 3 is the actuation means of a computer 21 like a mouse.

[0018] The above-mentioned keyboard 11 is the control unit of the computer 21 formed in order to operate a computer 21 instead of a pointing device 3 to a pointing device 3 for an unfamiliar student. In addition, in information distribution equipment 1, since contents are distributed automatically, in normal operation, a keyboard 11 and a pointing device 3 are not indispensable.

[0019] Drawing 4 is the block diagram showing the outline of the example of processing of the information carrier distribution system 100 of drawing 1. The information carrier distribution system 100 has the contents information centre 4 as an example of the contents negotiation service contractor 4

of drawing 1 , the contents information communication network 56 (Internet as the above-mentioned example), the accounting center 54, the accounting communication network 58, and the information receiving set 200 as a user 33 side of drawing 1 .

[0020] The above-mentioned contents information centre 4 has the distribution stage scheduler 50 and the download speed controller 52. The contents information centre 4 receives accounting information selection information 58a mentioned later from the accounting center 54. It has the information about which contents data 6 to the information receiving set 200, should attain to this accounting information selection information 58a when, and should be distributed to it with/or what transmission speed.

[0021] The above-mentioned distribution stage scheduler 50 performs schedule pipe \*\* for distributing the contents data 6 in the time zone of the request by the side of the information receiving set 200. The distribution stage scheduler 50 has the stage to distribute the contents data 6 by the information receiving set 200 side set up.

[0022] In the information receiving set 200, the distribution conditioning software is read, for example, Screen 24 like drawing 5 is displayed on the display 5 of drawing 2 (distribution conditioning software which is beforehand stored in the information receiving set 200 may be used). In the information receiving set 200, the stage of the request of the acquisition stage 24a as an item for specifying the stage when the contents data 6 come to hand in Screen 24 of drawing 5 because an operator operates the pointing device 3 of drawing 2 is specified. The stage specified here is registered into the distribution stage scheduler 50, and is managed.

[0023] The above-mentioned download speed controller 52 manages the transmission speed at the times (for example, download etc.) of distributing the contents data 6 to the information receiving set 200. The download speed controller 52 manages the stage to distribute the contents data 6 to the information receiving set 200 from the contents information centre 4, and has managed the transmission speed set as download speed 24b as an item for specifying the transmission speed displayed on the above-mentioned screen 24. Here, transmission speed is shown, for example on the basis of the standard reproduction speed (uniform velocity) of CD (Compact Disc). Of course, in addition to this, a concrete transmission speed, such as 5Mbps (Mega bits per second) and 10Mbps, may be shown. An operator chooses a desired transmission speed by operating the pointing device 3 of drawing 2 for Screen 24 of drawing 5 .

[0024] A gestalt with which at least one side is prepared in the contents information centre 4 is sufficient as the above-mentioned distribution stage scheduler 50 and the above-mentioned download speed controller 52. The contents information centre 4 distributes the contents data 6 to the information receiving set 200 through the contents information communication network 56 based on the above conditions. Furthermore, the contents information centre 4 hands over the information (distribution condition information and accounting information selection information mentioned later 58a) for performing accounting based on the distribution conditions of the distributed contents data 6 in the accounting center 54.

[0025] The above-mentioned contents information communication network 56 shows the above radiocommunication and wire communications, for example, shows the communication network about satellite broadcasting service or terrestrial broadcasting, the telephone line, etc. Communication networks, such as the Internet, are sufficient as the contents information communication network 56.

[0026] The above-mentioned accounting center 54 has a system for charging the information receiving set 200. The accounting center 54 hands over accounting information selection information 58a mentioned later to the contents information centre 4. The accounting center 54 has a system for charging the information receiving set 200 (user 33) based on above-mentioned distribution condition information. The accounting center 54 sends accounting information 41 and tariff 58b to a host computer 200 based on above-mentioned distribution condition information. A gestalt which is having the contents information centre 4 included is sufficient as the accounting center 54.

[0027] The above-mentioned accounting communication network 58 is a communication network for the accounting center 54 to communicate with the information receiving set 200. This accounting communication network 58 is constituted by the telephone line etc.

[0028] The above-mentioned information receiving set 200 is a receiving set for receiving the contents

data 6 distributed from the contents information centre 4 as mentioned above. The information receiving set 200 receives the contents data 6 based on acquisition stage 24a and/or download speed 24b which Screen 24 of drawing 5 was operated by the operator and set up.

[0029] The information carrier distribution systems 100 of drawing 1 are the above configurations, and they are explained, referring to drawing 1 - drawing 5 about the actuation next. The contents data 6 are beforehand registered into the contents negotiation service contractor 4 of drawing 1 by the contents provider 35. Users 30 are those who desire acquisition of the contents data 6 registered into the contents negotiation service contractor 4. A user 30 operates the information receiving set 200, and tries to acquire the contents data 6.

[0030] A user 30 operates Screen 24 of drawing 5 displayed on the display 5 of drawing 2, and specifies acquisition stage 24a which acquires the desired contents data 6 (contents name: ABC), and download speed 24b as mentioned above. Thus, the specified information is sent to the accounting center 54 as accounting information selection information 58a. This accounting information selection information 58a is further handed over by the contents information centre 4. In case the contents information centre 4 distributes the contents data 6 behind, accounting information selection information 58a is used for it as distribution conditions (transmission speed etc.).

[0031] The accounting center 54 transmits utilization table 58b as information about the charge of utilization (amount of accounting) to the information receiving set 200 to the information receiving set 200. Then, based on the selected conditions, the charge of utilization is displayed on the column of "the charge of utilization" of Screen 24. This charge of utilization is displayed by the accounting information 41 which has the information about the charge of utilization being distributed to a user 33 from the contents negotiation service contractor 4 like drawing 1.

[0032] A user 30 registers the reservation which acquires the contents data 6, after checking that it is a charge of utilization corresponding to the desired contents data 6 with reference to the displayed charge of utilization. the registered conditions (a distribution stage and download speed) -- for example, the distribution stage scheduler 50 and the download speed controller 52 manage, respectively.

[0033] For example, suppose that the user 30 is doing conditioning about both a distribution stage and download speed. If it becomes the time amount which the user 30 set up, the contents data 6 will be distributed by the set-up download speed (transmission speed). Moreover, the amount of accounting is good also as a gestalt which is determined by the information record medium which a user 30 receives and is recorded.

[0034] According to the operation gestalt of this invention, the information distributed to an addressee is charged to an addressee according to the stage to wish to receive in information. Therefore, an addressee can receive information at a desired stage and is further charged at information according to the stage. Therefore, an addressee can receive information at a desired stage and can offer the information distribution approach that an information distribution person can charge and distribute information efficiently.

[0035] Application drawing 6 is the block diagram showing the application to which the information offer approach of having applied the information distribution approach as an operation gestalt of this invention was applied. This information offer approach may be applied to equipment like database equipment 1000. Database equipment 1000 has the contents database 218 for storing and managing information like the contents data 6 mentioned above. That is, database equipment 1000 can be applied also when providing the information receiving set 200 (host computer) as an informational offer place not only with the gestalt which uses a communication line etc. as mentioned above but with the contents data 6 for pay (for example, when downloading).

[0036] A host computer 200 is the location suitable for offering information, for example, the terminal unit formed in a shop front. At least one medium (drawing 6 for example, ten pieces) slot 216 for equipping a host computer 200 with the information record medium for storing the contents data 6 is established. An information record medium here can consider CD-R (Compact Disc Recordable), MD (Mini Disc), a flash memory, a magnetic tape, etc. In database equipment 1000, when transmission speed is made quick and the contents data 6 to acquire are acquired, a circuit is occupied by few slots

216, but if transmission speed is reduced and acquired, the contents data 6 are acquirable with many slots 216.

[0037] With such database equipment 1000, if the amount of accounting is high when the contents data 6 are acquired, for example by high-speed transmission, and the contents data 6 are acquired by low-speed transmission, the amount of accounting will become low. Moreover, with database equipment 1000, since transmission speed changes with classes of information record medium for acquiring the contents data 6, the amount of accounting according to the class may be set up.

[0038] When recording the contents data 6 privately, for example by domestic (home taping), high accounting is made and high-speed transmission (high-speed copy) can be prevented from promoting tolerant culture (copy culture) socially to the unjust copy of the contents data 6 which cross the region of home taping according to this application. Moreover, if semiconductor memory, such as a flash memory, makes the amount of accounting high when recording using this since it can record far at high speed compared with information record media, such as the conventional disk and a magnetic tape, it can acquire the effectiveness same with having mentioned above.

[0039] Furthermore, when transmission speed is quick, the system which makes the amount of accounting low is also considered to be above-mentioned explanation by reverse. In this case, it is effective in the time amount which distribution takes being short and ending in case of high-speed transmission. For example, if the MD with the same information record medium also spends 40 minutes for standard speed MD to acquisition of the contents data 6, in the case of 4X MD and 8X MD, it can be managed with 10 minutes and 5 minutes, respectively. That is, since the monopoly time amount of a slot comes it short to become, the amount of accounting can be set up low.

[0040] By the way, this invention is not limited to the operation gestalt mentioned above. The information distribution approach of this invention is applicable also to CD changer for acquiring the information on desired out of the information on two or more CDs (Compact Disc).

[0041]

[Effect of the Invention] As explained above, according to this invention, an addressee can receive information at a desired stage and can offer the information distribution approach and the information offer approach an information distribution person can charge and distribute information efficiently.

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## TECHNICAL FIELD

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[Field of the Invention] This invention relates to the information distribution approach and the information offer approach for charging information and distributing it.

## PRIOR ART

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[Description of the Prior Art] In recent years, various information (it is hereafter called contents) is circulating by the so-called development of multimedia industry. These contents are distributed by the data communications service (it is hereafter called service) using wire communications, such as the radiocommunication and CATV (Cable Television) which use a communication satellite etc., and the Internet. With this service, predetermined accounting was made corresponding to the distributed contents. In the conventional service, the music information as speech information, image information, text information, etc., image information, a program, etc. are transmitted to the user (it is hereafter called a user) of a receiving side in the predetermined format, respectively.

## EFFECT OF THE INVENTION

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[Effect of the Invention] As explained above, according to this invention, an addressee can receive information at a desired stage and can offer the information distribution approach and the information offer approach an information distribution person can charge and distribute information efficiently.

## TECHNICAL PROBLEM

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[Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention] The amount of accounting to these contents is determined by initial setting regardless of the transmission speed of the stage which the user as an addressee can receive, or contents in many cases, and the amount of accounting seems however, not to differ according to the transmission speed naturally. Therefore, in a user side, the stage to receive the contents distributed will be limited and there is a trouble that it cannot set up by itself. On the other hand, in the information distribution person side who distributes contents, there is a time zone when distribution to a user overlaps, and there is a trouble that high-speed processing remarkable for distributing to a user is needed for this time zone.

[0004] Then, this invention can cancel the above-mentioned technical problem, an addressee can receive information at a desired stage, and it aims at an information distribution person offering the information distribution approach and the information offer approach of charging information and distributing it efficiently.

## MEANS

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[Means for Solving the Problem] If the above-mentioned object is in this invention, it is the information distribution approach for charging and distributing information to an addressee, and is attained by the information distribution approach characterized by determining the amount of accounting of said information according to the stage when said addressee receives said information.

[0006] According to the above-mentioned configuration, the information distributed to an addressee is charged to an addressee according to the stage to wish to receive in information. Therefore, an addressee can receive information at a desired stage and is further charged at information according to the stage.

[0007]

[Embodiment of the Invention] Hereafter, the gestalt of suitable operation of this invention is explained to a detail based on an accompanying drawing. In addition, since the gestalt of the operation described below is the suitable example of this invention, desirable various definition is attached technically, but especially the range of this invention is not restricted to these gestalten, as long as there is no publication of the purport which limits this invention in the following explanation.

[0008] Drawing 1 is image drawing of the information carrier distribution system by which the information distribution approach as a desirable operation gestalt of this invention was applied. The information carrier distribution system 100 (information carrier distribution equipment) is constituted by the contents provider 35, the contents negotiation service contractor 4, and the user 33. The information carrier distribution system 100 is a system for acquiring the music from those (contents provider 35 of drawing 1) who desire musical offer, and providing a third party (user 33 of drawing 1) with the music widely.

[0009] The above-mentioned contents providers 35 are those who write music, and are those who desire to offer the music which self composed to a third party. The contents provider 35 registers into the contents negotiation contractor 4 the contents data 6 (information, speech information, and image information), such as music data which self composed.

[0010] The above-mentioned contents negotiation service contractor 4 receives registration of the music of which the contents provider 35 expects registration. The contents negotiation service contractor 4 provides for the user 33 who desires to listen to desired music from the music of the accumulated large number etc. The contents negotiation offer contractor 4 distributes information to the information receiving set 200 (addressee) which a user 33 (addressee) operates and which is mentioned later with information distribution equipment 1 (some information carrier distribution equipments) like drawing 4 mentioned later.

[0011] In case the contents negotiation service contractor 4 offers information, such as music, a wire communication and radiocommunication may be used and you may be such combination. As an example using a wire communication, there is a gestalt using the Internet, CATV (when Cable Television, however this distribute image information etc.), an ATM (Asynchronous Transfer Mode) communication link, etc., and there is a gestalt using a communication satellite, terrestrial broadcasting, etc. as an example using radiocommunication. In addition, it cannot be overemphasized that these combination is sufficient as the above gestalt. By the following explanation, in case it distributes, the Internet shall be used as an example and the example of a configuration of the information carrier distribution system 100 is explained.

[0012] Drawing 2 is the perspective view showing an example of the appearance of the information distribution equipment 1 of drawing 1. Information distribution equipment 1 is a computer (the so-called personal computer may be used) in which for example, high-speed processing is possible. In addition, although it is equipment with which the information receiving set 200 applies to a computer or it almost similarly (for example, information terminal etc.), since the configuration is almost the same, the following explanation explains only information distribution equipment 1, and explains a different point each time.

[0013] Information distribution equipment 1 is a computer 21. A computer 21 has a means for grasping an information distribution person's distribution situation, and a user's 30 receiving situation. A

computer 21 has the disk unit 13 prepared in body 21a which has control sections, such as arithmetic and program control (CPU), and body 21a, a pointing device 3, a display 5, and a keyboard 11.

[0014] The computer 21 is equipped with the disk unit 13 which can read the information on the information record medium 15 at least. This information record medium 15 is a compact disk (CD-ROM), a flexible disk (floppy disk), etc.

[0015] Drawing 3 is the block diagram showing the detailed electric example of a configuration of the computer of drawing 2. a computer 21 -- a control section 9, a display 5, the storage section 17, a disk unit 13, and the enternal memory section 19 -- it has a pointing device 3 and a keyboard 11 preferably.

[0016] It connects with a display 5, the storage section 17, a disk unit 13, and the enternal memory section 19, and the above-mentioned control section 9 is preferably connected with the pointing device 3 and the keyboard 11. A control section 9 is for controlling each connected above-mentioned block. A control section 9 stores software in the enternal memory sections 19, such as a hard disk, and is a thing which is the need and which is performed while, making the storage sections 17, such as RAM (Random AccessMemory), into a working area by the way, for example.

[0017] The above-mentioned displays 5 are displays, such as CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) and a liquid crystal display. The above-mentioned pointing device 3 is the actuation means of a computer 21 like a mouse.

[0018] The above-mentioned keyboard 11 is the control unit of the computer 21 formed in order to operate a computer 21 instead of a pointing device 3 to a pointing device 3 for an unfamiliar student. In addition, in information distribution equipment 1, since contents are distributed automatically, in normal operation, a keyboard 11 and a pointing device 3 are not indispensable.

[0019] Drawing 4 is the block diagram showing the outline of the example of processing of the information carrier distribution system 100 of drawing 1. The information carrier distribution system 100 has the contents information centre 4 as an example of the contents negotiation service contractor 4 of drawing 1, the contents information communication network 56 (Internet as the above-mentioned example), the accounting center 54, the accounting communication network 58, and the information receiving set 200 as a user 33 side of drawing 1.

[0020] The above-mentioned contents information centre 4 has the distribution stage scheduler 50 and the download speed controller 52. The contents information centre 4 receives accounting information selection information 58a mentioned later from the accounting center 54. It has the information about which contents data 6 to the information receiving set 200, should attain to this accounting information selection information 58a when, and should be distributed to it with/or what transmission speed.

[0021] The above-mentioned distribution stage scheduler 50 performs schedule pipe \*\* for distributing the contents data 6 in the time zone of the request by the side of the information receiving set 200. The distribution stage scheduler 50 has the stage to distribute the contents data 6 by the information receiving set 200 side set up.

[0022] In the information receiving set 200, the distribution conditioning software is read, for example, Screen 24 like drawing 5 is displayed on the display 5 of drawing 2 (distribution conditioning software which is beforehand stored in the information receiving set 200 may be used). In the information receiving set 200, the stage of the request of the acquisition stage 24a as an item for specifying the stage when the contents data 6 come to hand in Screen 24 of drawing 5 because an operator operates the pointing device 3 of drawing 2 is specified. The stage specified here is registered into the distribution stage scheduler 50, and is managed.

[0023] The above-mentioned download speed controller 52 manages the transmission speed at the times (for example, download etc.) of distributing the contents data 6 to the information receiving set 200. The download speed controller 52 manages the stage to distribute the contents data 6 to the information receiving set 200 from the contents information centre 4, and has managed the transmission speed set as download speed 24b as an item for specifying the transmission speed displayed on the above-mentioned screen 24. Here, transmission speed is shown, for example on the basis of the standard reproduction speed (uniform velocity) of CD (Compact Disc). Of course, in addition to this, a concrete transmission speed, such as 5Mbps (Mega bits per second) and 10Mbps, may be shown. An operator chooses a

desired transmission speed by operating the pointing device 3 of drawing 2 for Screen 24 of drawing 5. [0024] A gestalt with which at least one side is prepared in the contents information centre 4 is sufficient as the above-mentioned distribution stage scheduler 50 and the above-mentioned download speed controller 52. The contents information centre 4 distributes the contents data 6 to the information receiving set 200 through the contents information communication network 56 based on the above conditions. Furthermore, the contents information centre 4 hands over the information (distribution condition information and accounting information selection information mentioned later 58a) for performing accounting based on the distribution conditions of the distributed contents data 6 in the accounting center 54.

[0025] The above-mentioned contents information communication network 56 shows the above radiocommunication and wire communications, for example, shows the communication network about satellite broadcasting service or terrestrial broadcasting, the telephone line, etc. Communication networks, such as the Internet, are sufficient as the contents information communication network 56.

[0026] The above-mentioned accounting center 54 has a system for charging the information receiving set 200. The accounting center 54 hands over accounting information selection information 58a mentioned later to the contents information centre 4. The accounting center 54 has a system for charging the information receiving set 200 (user 33) based on above-mentioned distribution condition information. The accounting center 54 sends accounting information 41 and tariff 58b to a host computer 200 based on above-mentioned distribution condition information. A gestalt which is having the contents information centre 4 included is sufficient as the accounting center 54.

[0027] The above-mentioned accounting communication network 58 is a communication network for the accounting center 54 to communicate with the information receiving set 200. This accounting communication network 58 is constituted by the telephone line etc.

[0028] The above-mentioned information receiving set 200 is a receiving set for receiving the contents data 6 distributed from the contents information centre 4 as mentioned above. The information receiving set 200 receives the contents data 6 based on acquisition stage 24a and/or download speed 24b which Screen 24 of drawing 5 was operated by the operator and set up.

[0029] The information carrier distribution systems 100 of drawing 1 are the above configurations, and they are explained, referring to drawing 1 - drawing 5 about the actuation next. The contents data 6 are beforehand registered into the contents negotiation service contractor 4 of drawing 1 by the contents provider 35. Users 30 are those who desire acquisition of the contents data 6 registered into the contents negotiation service contractor 4. A user 30 operates the information receiving set 200, and tries to acquire the contents data 6.

[0030] A user 30 operates Screen 24 of drawing 5 displayed on the display 5 of drawing 2, and specifies acquisition stage 24a which acquires the desired contents data 6 (contents name: ABC), and download speed 24b as mentioned above. Thus, the specified information is sent to the accounting center 54 as accounting information selection information 58a. This accounting information selection information 58a is further handed over by the contents information centre 4. In case the contents information centre 4 distributes the contents data 6 behind, accounting information selection information 58a is used for it as distribution conditions (transmission speed etc.).

[0031] The accounting center 54 transmits utilization table 58b as information about the charge of utilization (amount of accounting) to the information receiving set 200 to the information receiving set 200. Then, based on the selected conditions, the charge of utilization is displayed on the column of "the charge of utilization" of Screen 24. This charge of utilization is displayed by the accounting information 41 which has the information about the charge of utilization being distributed to a user 33 from the contents negotiation service contractor 4 like drawing 1.

[0032] A user 30 registers the reservation which acquires the contents data 6, after checking that it is a charge of utilization corresponding to the desired contents data 6 with reference to the displayed charge of utilization. the registered conditions (a distribution stage and download speed) -- for example, the distribution stage scheduler 50 and the download speed controller 52 manage, respectively.

[0033] For example, suppose that the user 30 is doing conditioning about both a distribution stage and

download speed. If it becomes the time amount which the user 30 set up, the contents data 6 will be distributed by the set-up download speed (transmission speed). Moreover, the amount of accounting is good also as a gestalt which is determined by the information record medium which a user 30 receives and is recorded.

[0034] According to the operation gestalt of this invention, the information distributed to an addressee is charged to an addressee according to the stage to wish to receive in information. Therefore, an addressee can receive information at a desired stage and is further charged at information according to the stage. Therefore, an addressee can receive information at a desired stage and can offer the information distribution approach that an information distribution person can charge and distribute information efficiently.

[0035] Application drawing 6 is the block diagram showing the application to which the information offer approach of having applied the information distribution approach as an operation gestalt of this invention was applied. This information offer approach may be applied to equipment like database equipment 1000. Database equipment 1000 has the contents database 218 for storing and managing information like the contents data 6 mentioned above. That is, database equipment 1000 can be applied also when providing the information receiving set 200 (host computer) as an informational offer place not only with the gestalt which uses a communication line etc. as mentioned above but with the contents data 6 for pay (for example, when downloading).

[0036] A host computer 200 is the location suitable for offering information, for example, the terminal unit formed in a shop front. At least one medium (drawing 6 for example, ten pieces) slot 216 for equipping a host computer 200 with the information record medium for storing the contents data 6 is established. An information record medium here can consider CD-R (Compact Disc Recordable), MD (Mini Disc), a flash memory, a magnetic tape, etc. In database equipment 1000, when transmission speed is made quick and the contents data 6 to acquire are acquired, a circuit is occupied by few slots 216, but if transmission speed is reduced and acquired, the contents data 6 are acquirable with many slots 216.

[0037] With such database equipment 1000, if the amount of accounting is high when the contents data 6 are acquired, for example by high-speed transmission, and the contents data 6 are acquired by low-speed transmission, the amount of accounting will become low. Moreover, with database equipment 1000, since transmission speed changes with classes of information record medium for acquiring the contents data 6, the amount of accounting according to the class may be set up.

[0038] When recording the contents data 6 privately, for example by domestic (home taping), high accounting is made and high-speed transmission (high-speed copy) can be prevented from promoting tolerant culture (copy culture) socially to the unjust copy of the contents data 6 which cross the region of home taping according to this application. Moreover, if semiconductor memory, such as a flash memory, makes the amount of accounting high when recording using this since it can record far at high speed compared with information record media, such as the conventional disk and a magnetic tape, it can acquire the effectiveness same with having mentioned above.

[0039] Furthermore, when transmission speed is quick, the system which makes the amount of accounting low is also considered to be above-mentioned explanation by reverse. In this case, it is effective in the time amount which distribution takes being short and ending in case of high-speed transmission. For example, if the MD with the same information record medium also spends 40 minutes for standard speed MD to acquisition of the contents data 6, in the case of 4X MD and 8X MD, it can be managed with 10 minutes and 5 minutes, respectively. That is, since the monopoly time amount of a slot comes it short to become, the amount of accounting can be set up low.

[0040] By the way, this invention is not limited to the operation gestalt mentioned above. The information distribution approach of this invention is applicable also to CD changer for acquiring the information on desired out of the information on two or more CDs (Compact Disc).

## DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

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[Brief Description of the Drawings]

[Drawing 1] Image drawing of the information carrier distribution system by which the information distribution approach as a desirable operation gestalt of this invention was applied.

[Drawing 2] The perspective view showing an example of the appearance of the information distribution equipment 1 of drawing 1.

[Drawing 3] The block diagram showing the detailed electric example of a configuration of the computer of drawing 2.

[Drawing 4] The block diagram showing the outline of the example of processing of the information carrier distribution system 100 of drawing 1.

[Drawing 5] Drawing showing an example of the screen displayed on the display of drawing 2.

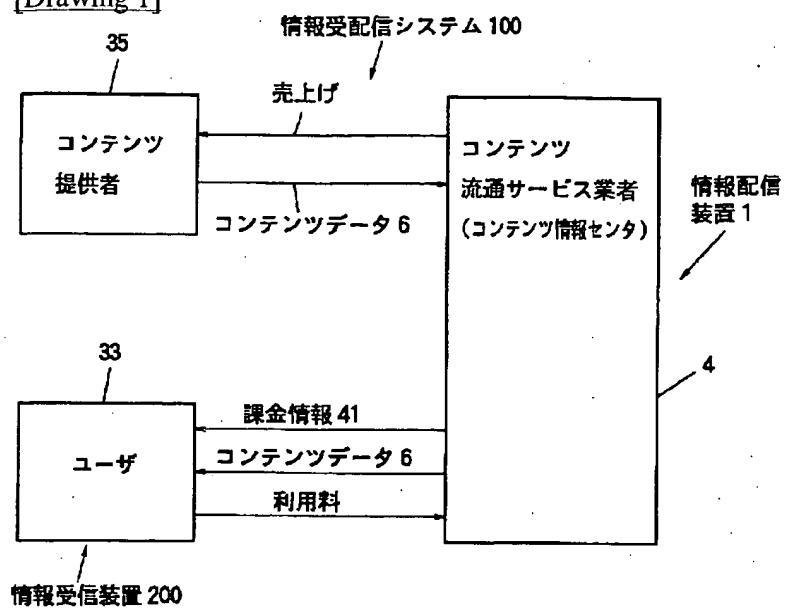
[Drawing 6] The block diagram showing the application to which the information offer approach of having applied the information distribution approach as an operation gestalt of this invention was applied.

[Description of Notations]

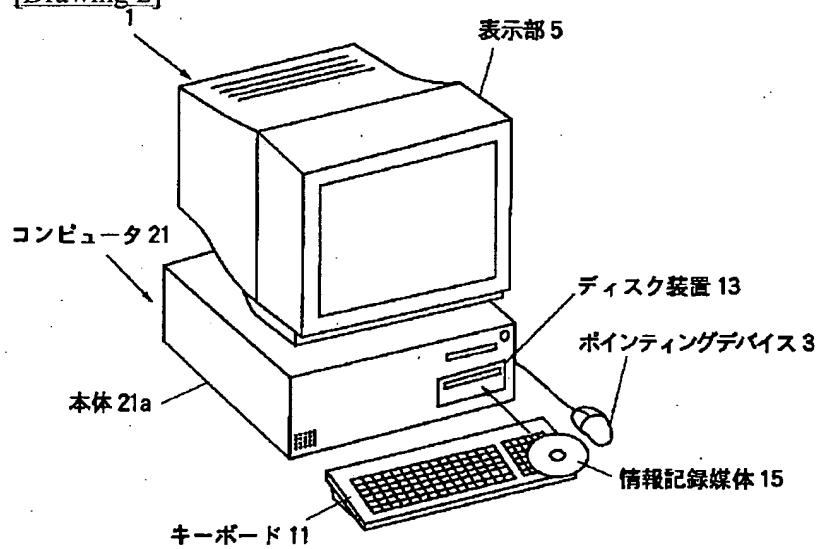
1 [...] Accounting information, 100 / ... Information carrier distribution equipment (information carrier distribution system), 200 / ... An information receiving set (addressee), 1000 / ... Database equipment (application to which the information offer approach was applied) ] ... Information distribution equipment (information distribution equipment of the system-information carrier distribution system by which the information distribution approach was applied), 6 ... Contents data (information), 33 ... A user (addressee), 41

## DRAWINGS

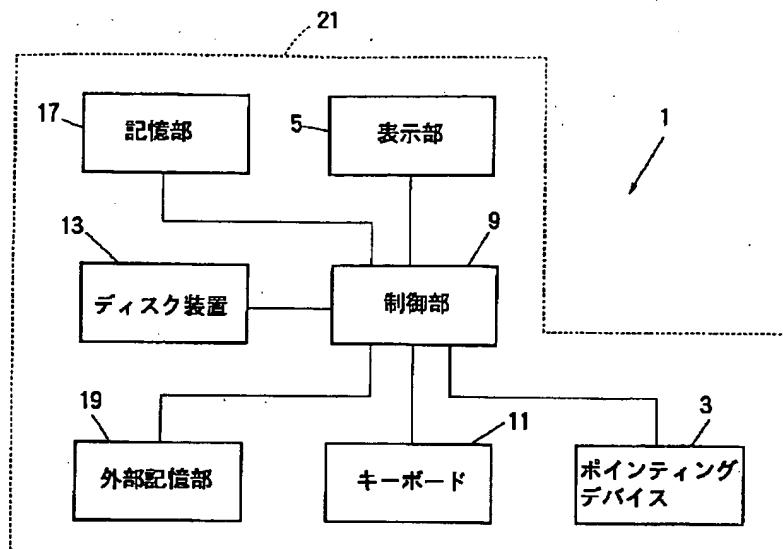
### [Drawing 1]



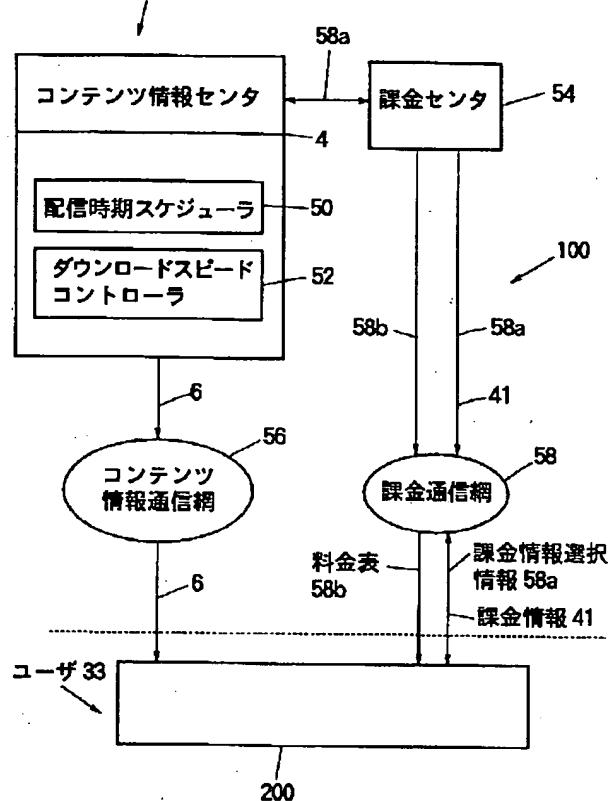
### [Drawing 2]



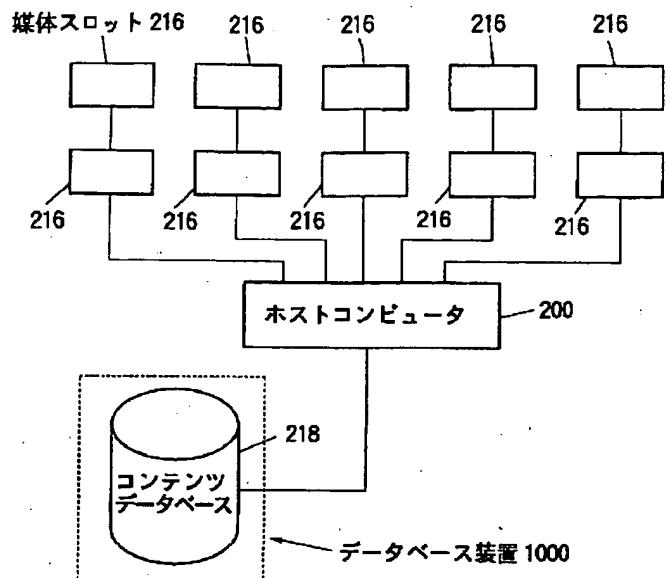
### [Drawing 3]



[Drawing 4]



[Drawing 6]



[Drawing 5]

Diagram illustrating a table structure within a large rectangular frame. The table has four rows and six columns. The first row has three columns labeled "A B C". The second row has five columns labeled "即時 1日以内 2日以内 10日以内 1ヶ月以内". The third row has five columns labeled "等速 2倍速 4倍速 8倍速 100倍速". The fourth row is empty.

コンテンツ名	A	B	C		
入手時期	即時	1日以内	2日以内	10日以内	1ヶ月以内
ダウンロード スピード	等速	2倍速	4倍速	8倍速	100倍速
利用料					

(51) Int.Cl.	識別記号	F I	マークコード (参考)
H04H 1/00		H04H 1/00	Z 5C064
H04N 7/16		H04N 7/16	H C

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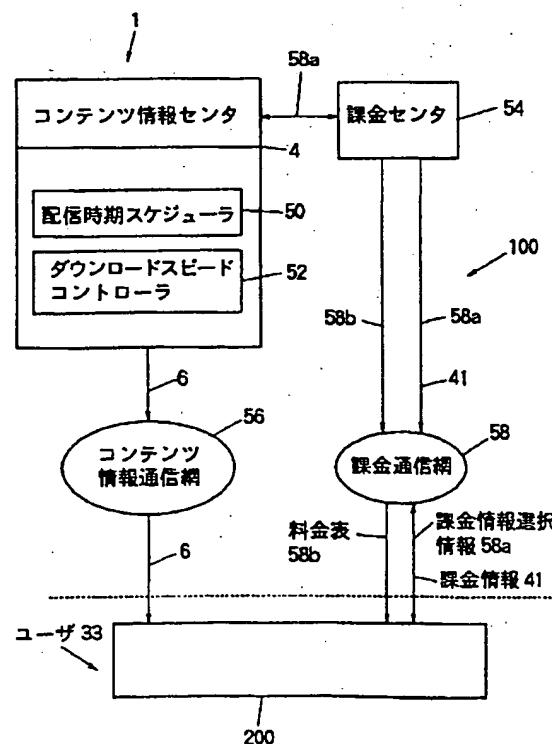
弁理士 岡▲崎▼ 信太郎 (外1名)

## (54)【発明の名称】情報配信方法及び情報提供方法

## (57)【要約】

【課題】受信者が所望の時期に情報を受信することができ、情報配信者が効率よく情報を課金して配信することができる情報配信方法及び情報提供方法を提供すること。

【解決手段】受信者に情報を課金して配信するための情報配信方法であって、前記受信者が前記情報を受信する時期に応じて前記情報の課金額を決定する。



## 【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 情報を課金して受信者に配信するための情報配信方法であって、前記受信者が前記情報を受信する時期に応じて前記情報の課金額を決定することを特徴とする情報配信方法。

【請求項2】 前記情報は、音声情報、画像情報、テキスト情報である請求項1に記載の情報配信方法。

【請求項3】 前記情報は、無線通信や有線通信を利用して配信される請求項1に記載の情報配信方法。

【請求項4】 情報を課金して受信者に配信するための情報配信方法であって、

前記受信者が前記情報を配信する伝送速度に応じて前記情報の課金額を決定することを特徴とする情報配信方法。

【請求項5】 前記情報は、音声情報、画像情報、テキスト情報である請求項4に記載の情報配信方法。

【請求項6】 前記情報は、無線通信や有線通信を利用して配信される請求項4に記載の情報配信方法。

【請求項7】 情報を課金して受信者に配信するための情報配信方法であって、

前記受信者が前記情報を受信する情報記録媒体に応じて前記情報の課金額を決定することを特徴とする情報配信方法。

【請求項8】 前記情報は、音声情報、画像情報、テキスト情報である請求項7に記載の情報配信方法。

【請求項9】 前記情報は、無線通信や有線通信を利用して配信される請求項7に記載の情報配信方法。

【請求項10】 情報を課金して提供するための情報提供方法であって、

前記情報が受け取られる時期に応じて前記情報の課金額を決定することを特徴とする情報提供方法。

【請求項11】 情報を課金して提供するための情報提供方法であって、

前記情報を提供する際の前記情報を供給する速度に応じて前記情報の課金額を決定することを特徴とする情報提供方法。

【請求項12】 情報を課金して提供するための情報提供方法であって、

前記情報が受け取られる情報記録媒体に応じて前記情報の課金額を決定することを特徴とする情報提供方法。

## 【発明の詳細な説明】

## 【0001】

【発明の属する技術分野】 本発明は、情報を課金して配信するための情報配信方法及び情報提供方法に関するものである。

## 【0002】

【従来の技術】 近年、いわゆるマルチメディア産業の発達によって様々な情報（以下、コンテンツと呼ぶ）が流れている。これらのコンテンツは、例えば通信衛星等

vision) やインターネット等のような有線通信を用いた情報配信サービス（以下、サービスと呼ぶ）によって配信されている。このサービスでは、配信されたコンテンツに対して所定の課金がなされていた。従来のサービスでは、それぞれ音声情報、画像情報、テキスト情報等としての音楽情報、映像情報、プログラム等は、所定のフォーマットで受信側のユーザ（以下、ユーザと呼ぶ）に送信されている。

## 【0003】

【発明が解決しようとする課題】 ところが、これらのコンテンツへの課金額は、受信者としてのユーザの受信可能な時期やコンテンツの伝送速度に無関係に初期設定で決定されている場合が多く、当然その伝送速度に応じて課金額が異なるようなことはない。従って、ユーザ側では、配信されるコンテンツを受信する時期が限定されることになり、自分で設定することができないという問題点がある。一方、コンテンツを配信する情報配信者側では、ユーザへの配信が重複する時間帯があり、この時間帯にユーザへ配信するにはかなりの高速処理が必要となるという問題点がある。

【0004】 そこで本発明は上記課題を解消し、受信者が所望の時期に情報を受信することができ、情報配信者が効率よく情報を課金して配信することができる情報配信方法及び情報提供方法を提供することを目的としている。

## 【0005】

【課題を解決するための手段】 上記目的は、本発明においては、受信者に情報を課金して配信するための情報配信方法であって、前記受信者が前記情報を受信する時期に応じて前記情報の課金額を決定することを特徴とする情報配信方法により、達成される。

【0006】 上記構成によれば、受信者に配信される情報は、受信者が情報を受信を希望する時期に応じて課金される。従って、受信者は、所望の時期に情報を受信でき、さらにその時期に応じて情報に課金される。

## 【0007】

【発明の実施の形態】 以下、本発明の好適な実施の形態を添付図面に基づいて詳細に説明する。なお、以下に述べる実施の形態は、本発明の好適な具体例であるから、技術的に好ましい種々の限定が付されているが、本発明の範囲は、以下の説明において特に本発明を限定する旨の記載がない限り、これらの形態に限られるものではない。

【0008】 図1は、本発明の好ましい実施形態としての情報配信方法が適用された情報受配信システムのイメージ図である。情報受配信システム100（情報受配装置）は、例えばコンテンツ提供者35、コンテンツ互通サービス業者4及びユーザ33によって構成されている。情報受配信システム100は、例えば音楽等の音を望む者（図1のコンテンツ提供者35）からそのモ

を取得して、その音楽を広く第三者（図1のユーザ33）に提供するためのシステムである。

【0009】上記コンテンツ提供者35は、例えば作曲を行うような者等であり、自身が作曲した音楽等を第三者に対して提供することを望む者等である。コンテンツ提供者35は、例えば自分が作曲した音楽データ等のコンテンツデータ6（情報、音声情報や画像情報）をコンテンツ流通業者4に登録する。

【0010】上記コンテンツ流通サービス業者4は、コンテンツ提供者35が登録を希望する音楽等の登録を受け付ける。コンテンツ流通サービス業者4は、その蓄積された多数の音楽等から、所望の音楽を聞くことを望むユーザ33に提供する。コンテンツ流通提供業者4は、例えば後述する図4のような情報配信装置1（情報受配信装置の一部）によって情報を、ユーザ33（受信者）が操作する後述する情報受信装置200（受信者）に対して配信する。

【0011】コンテンツ流通サービス業者4が音楽等の情報を提供する際には、有線通信や無線通信を使用したものであっても良いし、これらの組み合わせであっても良い。有線通信を利用した例としては、インターネット、CATV（Cable Television、但し、これは画像情報等も配信する場合）、ATM（Asynchronous Transfer Mode）通信等を利用する形態があり、無線通信を利用した例としては、通信衛星、地上波放送等を利用する形態がある。尚、以上の形態は、それら組み合わせでも良いことはいうまでもない。以下の説明では、配信する際には、一例としてインターネットを利用しているものとし、情報受配信システム100の構成例について説明する。

【0012】図2は、図1の情報配信装置1の外観の一例を示す斜視図である。情報配信装置1は、例えば高速処理が可能なコンピュータ（いわゆるパーソナルコンピュータでも良い）である。尚、情報受信装置200も、ほぼ同様に例えばコンピュータ又はそれに準ずる装置（例えば情報端末等）であるが、構成がほぼ同様であるので、以下の説明では情報配信装置1についてのみ説明し、異なる点についてはその都度説明する。

【0013】情報配信装置1は、例えばコンピュータ21である。コンピュータ21は、情報配信者の配信状況やユーザ30の受信状況を把握するための手段を有する。コンピュータ21は、中央演算処理装置（CPU）等の制御部を有する本体21a、本体21aに設けられたディスク装置13、ポインティングデバイス3、表示部5及びキーボード11を有する。

【0014】コンピュータ21は、例えば情報記録媒体15の情報を少なくとも読み出すことができるディスク装置13を備えている。この情報記録媒体15は、例えばコンパクトディスク（CD-ROM）やフレキシブルディスク（フロッピーディスク）等である。

【0015】図3は、図2のコンピュータの詳細な電気的な構成例を示すブロック図である。コンピュータ21は、制御部9、表示部5、記憶部17、ディスク装置13及び外部記憶部19、好ましくはポインティングデバイス3及びキーボード11を有する。

【0016】上記制御部9は、例えば表示部5、記憶部17、ディスク装置13及び外部記憶部19と接続されており、好ましくはポインティングデバイス3及びキーボード11と接続されている。制御部9は、接続された上述の各ブロックを制御するためのものである。制御部9は、例えばハードディスク等の外部記憶部19にソフトウェアを格納し、必要な時に例えばRAM（Random Access Memory）等の記憶部17を作業領域としながら実行するものである。

【0017】上記表示部5は、例えばCRT（Cathode Ray Tube）や液晶ディスプレイ等の表示装置である。上記ポインティングデバイス3は、例えばマウスのようなコンピュータ21の操作手段である。

【0018】上記キーボード11は、例えばポインティングデバイス3に不慣れな学習者のためにポインティングデバイス3の代わりにコンピュータ21を操作するため等に設けられたコンピュータ21の操作部である。尚、情報配信装置1においては、自動的にコンテンツの配信を行うので通常の操作においてはキーボード11及びポインティングデバイス3は必須ではない。

【0019】図4は、図1の情報受配信システム100の処理例の概要を示すブロック図である。情報受配信システム100は、図1のコンテンツ流通サービス業者4の一例としてのコンテンツ情報センタ4、コンテンツ情報通信網56（前述の一例としてのインターネット）、課金センタ54、課金通信網58、図1のユーザ33側としての情報受信装置200を有する。

【0020】上記コンテンツ情報センタ4は、配信時期スケジューラ50及びダウンロードスピードコントローラ52を有する。コンテンツ情報センタ4は、後述する課金情報選択情報58aを課金センタ54から受け取る。この課金情報選択情報58aには、どのコンテンツデータ6を情報受信装置200に対して、いつ及び／又はどの程度の伝送速度で配信すべきかに関する情報を有する。

【0021】上記配信時期スケジューラ50は、情報受信装置200側の所望の時間帯にコンテンツデータ6を配信するためのスケジュール管理を行う。配信時期スケジューラ50は、情報受信装置200側によってコンテンツデータ6を配信する時期を設定される。

【0022】情報受信装置200では、その配信条件設定ソフトウェアを読み込んで、例えば図5のような画面24を、図2の表示部5に表示する（予め情報受信装置200に格納されているような配信条件設定ソフトウェアでもよい）。情報受信装置200では、操作者が例え

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ば図2のポインティングデバイス3を操作することで、図5の画面24においてコンテンツデータ6を入手する時期を指定するための項目としての入手時期24a内の所望の時期を指定する。ここで指定した時期は、配信の所望の時期を指定する。

【0023】上記ダウンロードスピードコントローラ52は、コンテンツデータ6を情報受信装置200に配信する（例えばダウンロード等）する際の伝送速度を管理する。ダウンロードスピードコントローラ52は、コンテンツ情報センタ4からコンテンツデータ6を情報受信装置200に配信する時期を管理するものであり、前述の画面24に表示された伝送速度を指定するための項目と画面24に表示された伝送速度を指定するための項目としてのダウンロードスピード24bに設定された伝送速度を管理している。ここでは、例えばCD（Compact Disc）の標準再生速度（等速）を基準に伝送速度が提示されている。もちろん、この他、5Mbps（Mega bits per second）、10Mbpsというような具体的な伝送速度が提示されても良い。操作者は、図5の画面24を図2のポインティングデバイス3を操作することによって所望の伝送速度を選択する。

【0024】上述の配信時期スケジューラ50及びダウンロードスピードコントローラ52は、少なくとも一方がコンテンツ情報センタ4に設けられているような形態でもよい。コンテンツ情報センタ4は、上述のような条件に基づいてコンテンツデータ6をコンテンツ情報通信網56を介して情報受信装置200に配信する。さらに、コンテンツ情報センタ4は、配信されたコンテンツデータ6の配信条件に基づいた課金を行うための情報（配信条件情報、後述する課金情報選択情報58a）を30

課金センタ54に引き渡す。

【0025】上記コンテンツ情報通信網56は、上述のような無線通信や有線通信を示し、例えば衛星放送や地上波放送に関する通信網、電話回線等を示している。コンテンツ情報通信網56は、例えばインターネット等のような通信網でもよい。

【0026】上記課金センタ54は、情報受信装置200に課金するためのシステムを有する。課金センタ54は、後述する課金情報選択情報58aをコンテンツ情報センタ4に引き渡す。課金センタ54は、上述の配信条件に基づいて、情報受信装置200（ユーザ33）に課金を行うためのシステムを有する。課金センタ54は、上述の配信条件情報を基づいてホストコンピュータ200に対して、課金情報41や料金表58bを送付する。課金センタ54は、例えばコンテンツ情報センタ4を含められているような形態でも良い。

【0027】上記課金通信網58は、課金センタ54が情報受信装置200と通信をおこなうための通信網である。この課金通信網58は、例えば電話回線等によって

【0028】上記情報受信装置200は、上述のようにコンテンツ情報センタ4から配信されたコンテンツデータ6を受信するための受信装置である。情報受信装置200は、操作者によって図5の画面24が操作され設定された入手時期24a及び／又はダウンロードスピード24bに基づいて、コンテンツデータ6を受信する。

【0029】図1の情報受配信システム100は以上の構成であり、次にその動作について図1～図5を参照しながら説明する。図1のコンテンツ流通サービス業者4には、例えばコンテンツ提供者35によって予めコンテンツデータ6が登録されている。ユーザ30は、コンテンツ流通サービス業者4に登録されたコンテンツデータ6の取得を望む者である。ユーザ30は、情報受信装置200を操作して、コンテンツデータ6を取得しようと試みる。

【0030】ユーザ30は、図2の表示部5に表示された図5の画面24を操作して、所望のコンテンツデータ6（コンテンツ名：ABC）を取得する入手時期24aや、ダウンロードスピード24bを上述のように指定する。このようにして指定した情報は、課金情報選択情報58aとして課金センタ54に送られる。この課金情報選択情報58aは、さらにコンテンツ情報センタ4に引き渡される。コンテンツ情報センタ4は、後にコンテンツデータ6を配信する際に配信条件（伝送速度等）として課金情報選択情報58aを使用する。

【0031】課金センタ54は、情報受信装置200に対して利用料（課金額）に関する情報としての利用表58bを情報受信装置200に送信する。すると、画面24の「利用料」の欄には、選択した条件に基づいて利用料が表示される。この利用料は、利用料に関する情報を有する課金情報41が図1のようにコンテンツ流通サービス業者4からユーザ33に配信されることで表示される。

【0032】ユーザ30は、表示された利用料を参照して、所望のコンテンツデータ6に見合った利用料であることを確認した上で、コンテンツデータ6を取得する予約を登録する。登録された条件（配信時期やダウンロードスピード）は、例えばそれぞれ配信時期スケジューラ50やダウンロードスピードコントローラ52が管理する。

【0033】例えばユーザ30が配信時期及びダウンロードスピードの両方について条件設定しているとする。ユーザ30が設定した時間となると、コンテンツデータ6は、設定したダウンロードスピード（伝送速度）によって配信される。また、課金額は、ユーザ30が受信して記録する情報記録媒体によって決定されるような形態としても良い。

【0034】本発明の実施形態によれば、受信者に配信される情報は、受信者が情報を受信を希望する時期に応じて課金される。従って、受信者は、所望の時期に情報

を受信でき、さらにその時期に応じて情報に課金される。よって、受信者が所望の時期に情報を受信することができ、情報配信者が効率よく情報を課金して配信することができる情報配信方法を提供することができる。

**【0035】応用例**

図6は、本発明の実施形態としての情報配信方法を応用した情報提供方法が適用された応用例を示すブロック図である。この情報提供方法は、例えばデータベース装置1000のような装置に適用されても良い。データベース装置1000は、例えば前述したコンテンツデータ6のような情報を格納し、管理するためのコンテンツデータベース218を有する。つまり、データベース装置1000は、前述のように通信回線等を利用する形態のみならず、コンテンツデータ6を情報の提供先としての情報受信装置200(ホストコンピュータ)に有料で提供する(例えばダウンロードされる場合)場合にも適用することができる。

【0036】ホストコンピュータ200は、例えば情報を提供するに適した場所、例えば店頭に設けられる端末装置である。ホストコンピュータ200には、コンテンツデータ6を格納するための情報記録媒体を装着するための少なくとも1つの(図6では例えば10個)媒体スロット216が設けられている。ここでいう情報記録媒体は、CD-R(Compact Disc Recordable)、MD(Mini Disc)、フラッシュメモリ、磁気テープ等が考えられる。データベース装置1000においては、取得するコンテンツデータ6を伝送速度を速くして取得すると少ないスロット216によって回線が占有されるが、伝送速度を落として取得すると多くのスロット216によってコンテンツデータ6を取得することができる。

【0037】このようなデータベース装置1000では、例えば高速伝送によってコンテンツデータ6を取得すると課金額が高く、低速伝送によってコンテンツデータ6を取得すると課金額が低くなる。また、データベース装置1000では、コンテンツデータ6を取得するための情報記録媒体の種類によって伝送速度が異なるため、その種類に応じた課金額の設定をしても良い。

【0038】この応用例によれば、例えば家庭内でコンテンツデータ6を私的に録音を行う場合(ホームテーピング)においても高速伝送(高速複写)は高い課金がなされ、ホームテーピングの域を超えるようなコンテンツデータ6の不正複写に対して社会的に寛容な文化(コピー文化)を助長しないようにすることができる。また、フラッシュメモリ等の半導体メモリは、従来のディスク

や磁気テープ等の情報記録媒体に比べてはるかに高速で録音できるため、これを用いて録音する場合は課金額を高くすれば、前述したことと同様な効果を得ることができる。

【0039】さらに、上述の説明とは逆に伝送速度が速い場合に課金額を低くするシステムも考えられる。この場合は、高速伝送だと配信に要する時間が短くて済むという効果がある。例えば情報記録媒体が同じMDでも、標準速MDがコンテンツデータ6の取得に40分かかるとすれば、4倍速MD、8倍速MDの場合は、それぞれ10分、5分で済む。すなわち、スロットの専有時間が短くなるので、課金額を低く設定できる。

【0040】ところで本発明は上述した実施形態に限定されるものではない。本発明の情報配信方法は、例えば複数のCD(Compact Disc)の情報の中から所望の情報を取得するためのCDチェンジャーにも適用することができる。

**【0041】**

**【発明の効果】**以上説明したように、本発明によれば、受信者が所望の時期に情報を受信することができ、情報配信者が効率よく情報を課金して配信することができる情報配信方法及び情報提供方法を提供することができる。

**【図面の簡単な説明】**

【図1】本発明の好ましい実施形態としての情報配信方法が適用された情報受配信システムのイメージ図。

【図2】図1の情報配信装置1の外観の一例を示す斜視図。

【図3】図2のコンピュータの詳細な電気的な構成例を示すブロック図。

【図4】図1の情報受配信システム100の処理例の概要を示すブロック図。

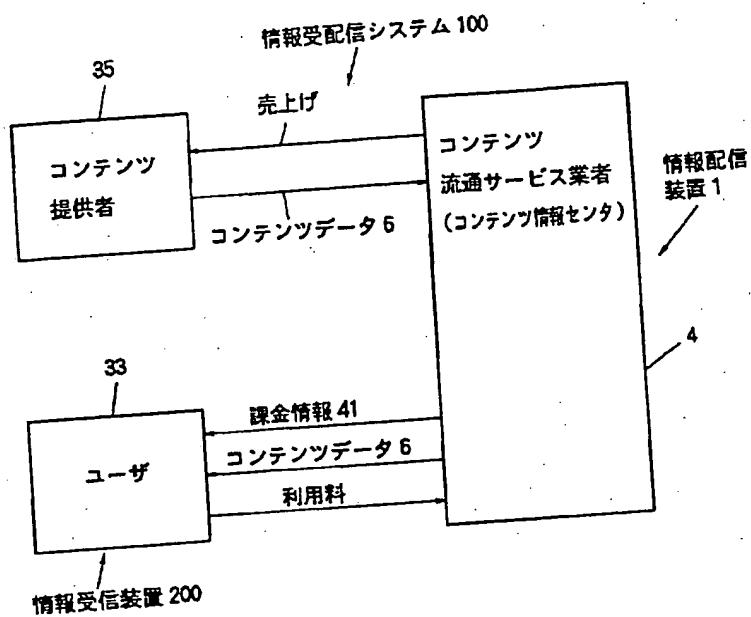
【図5】図2の表示部に表示された画面の一例を示す図。

【図6】本発明の実施形態としての情報配信方法を応用した情報提供方法が適用された応用例を示すブロック図。

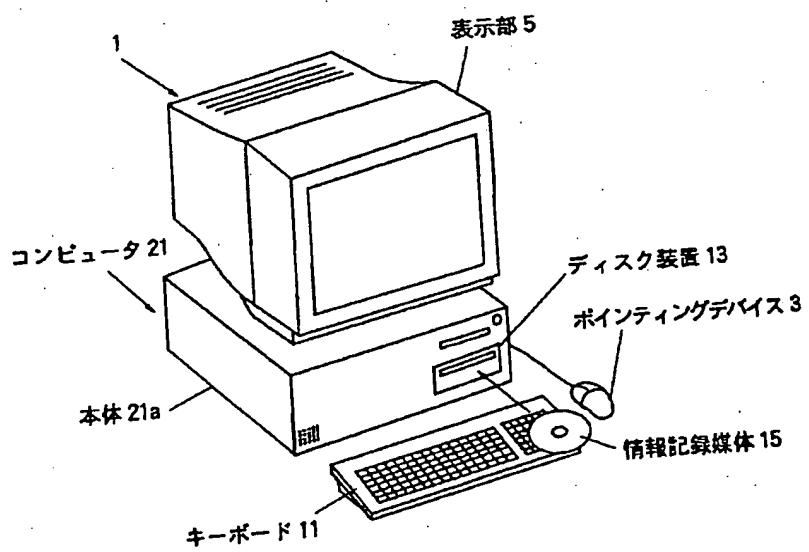
**【符号の説明】**

1・・・情報配信装置(情報配信方法が適用されたシステム情報受配信システムの情報配信装置)、6・・・コンテンツデータ(情報)、33・・・ユーザ(受信者)、41・・・課金情報、100・・・情報受配信装置(情報受配信システム)、200・・・情報受信装置(受信者)、1000・・・データベース装置(情報提供方法が適用された応用例)

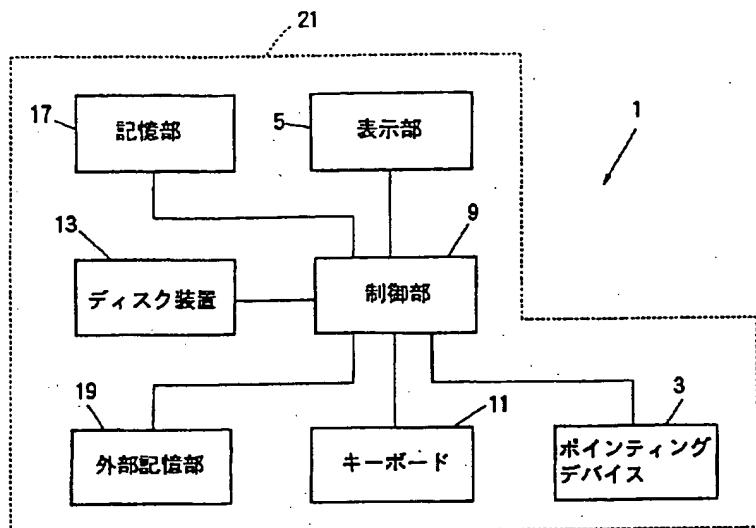
[図1]



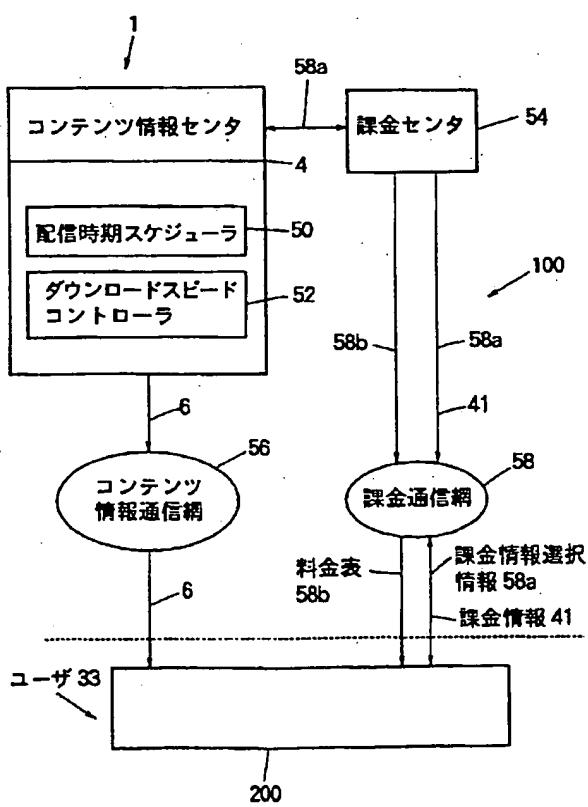
[図2]



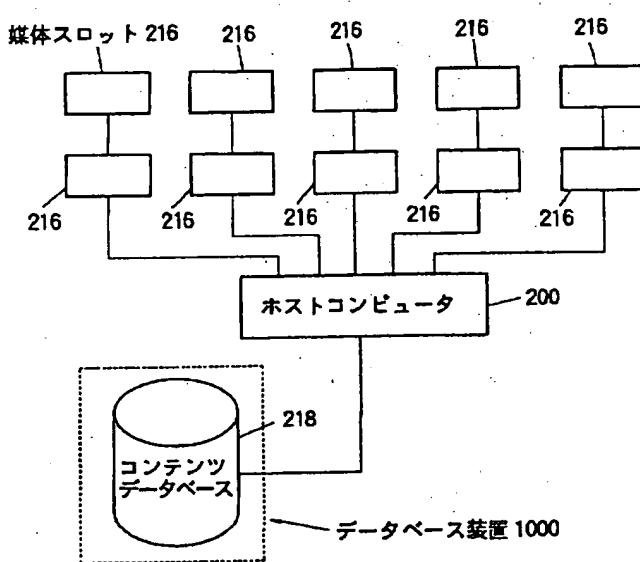
【図 3】



【図 4】



【図 6】



【図5】

コンテンツ名	A	B	C
入手時期	即時	1日以内	2日以内
ダウンロードスピード	等速	2倍速	4倍速
利用料	10日以内	1ヶ月以内	

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